

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1. (Original) An artificial tree comprising:

a base;  
a telescoping center pole supported vertically by the base;  
a plurality of curvilinear elements of graduated diameter supported from the top of the telescoping center pole by a plurality of circumferentially spaced tethers, the diameter of the curvilinear elements graduating in inverse proportion to the distance above the base;  
a plurality of circumferentially spaced branches pivotally connected to the curvilinear elements and extending radially there from; and  
an electrically powered drive mechanism that is controllable by a user to selectively raise and lower the telescoping center pole.

Claim 2. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 1 wherein the curvilinear elements are vertically spaced rings.

Claim 3. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 1 wherein the curvilinear elements are part of a spiral frame.

Claim 4. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 2, further comprising a top tree section attachable to the top of the telescoping center pole.

Claim 5. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 4 wherein the top tree section comprises a center pole member and a plurality of circumferentially spaced branches connected to the center pole member.

Claim 6. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 3 wherein each branch comprises at least one lighting element.

Claim 7. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 5 wherein each branch of the tree and each branch of the top tree section comprises at least one lighting element.

Claim 8. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 7 comprising an electrical connection between the lighting elements of the tree and the lighting elements of the top tree section.

Claim 9. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 1 wherein the drive mechanism comprises an electric motor and a shaft that is rotatable by the motor to raise and lower the telescoping center pole.

Claim 10. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 9 wherein the shaft has a threaded section.

Claim 11. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 1 comprising a control panel having at least one switch that is operable by a user to selectively raise and lower the telescoping center pole.

Claim 12. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 1 comprising a control panel having at least one switch that is operable by a user to selectively activate and deactivate the lighting element.

Claims 13-25. (Canceled)

Claim 26. (Original) An artificial tree comprising:

a base;  
a telescoping center pole supported vertically by the base;  
a plurality of rings of graduated diameter supported from the top of the telescoping center pole by a plurality of circumferentially spaced tethers;  
a plurality of circumferentially spaced branches pivotally connected to each ring and extending radially there from; and  
an electrically powered drive mechanism that is controllable by a user to selectively raise and lower the telescoping center pole.

Claim 27. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 26, further comprising a top tree section attachable to the top of the telescoping center pole.

Claim 28. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 27 wherein the top tree section comprises a center pole member and a plurality of circumferentially spaced branches connected to the center pole member.

Claim 29. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 26 wherein each branch comprises at least one lighting element.

Claim 30. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 27 wherein each branch of the tree and each branch of the top tree section comprises at least one lighting element.

Claim 31. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 30 comprising an electrical connection between the lighting elements of the tree and the lighting elements of the top tree section.

Claim 32. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 26, further comprising at least one flexible branch tether that limits downward movement of each pivotally connected branch around the ring to which it is pivotally connected.

Claim 33. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 32 wherein the branch tethers are supported from an elevation near the top of the telescoping center pole.

Claim 34. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 26 wherein the drive mechanism comprises an electric motor and a shaft that is rotatable by the motor to raise and lower the telescoping center pole.

Claim 35. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 34 wherein the shaft has a threaded section.

Claim 36. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 26 comprising a control panel having at least one switch that is operable by a user to selectively raise and lower the telescoping center pole.

Claim 37. (Original) The artificial tree of claim 29 comprising a control panel having at least one switch that is operable by a user to selectively activate and deactivate the lighting element.

Claims 38-46. (Canceled)

Claim 47. (Currently amended) ~~The support structure of claim 46, further comprising~~ An automatically erectable support structure comprising:

a base;

a plurality of telescoping tubular members comprising a first member that is disposed in fixed relation to the base and at least one other member that can telescope upwardly from the first member;

a vertical shaft rotatably mounted inside the base and extending upwardly from the base;

an electric motor selectively providing rotational motion to the vertical shaft in one of two rotational directions;

at least second and third tubular members telescoping upwardly from the first tubular member;

a tension line having a first end connected to the first tubular member and a second end connected to the third tubular member,

the vertical shaft further comprising a threaded upper portion cooperatively engaged with at least one tubular member other than the first tubular member to elevate the at least one tubular member other than the first tubular member relative to the first tubular member when the shaft is rotated in a first rotational direction and to lower the at least one tubular member other than the first tubular member relative to the first tubular member when the shaft is rotated in the second rotational direction, and

the third tubular member telescopes upwardly from the second tubular member.

Claim 48. (Currently amended)

~~The support structure of claim 44 comprising An automatically erectable support structure comprising:~~

a base;

a plurality of telescoping tubular members comprising a first member that is disposed in fixed relation to the base and at least one other member that can telescope upwardly from the first member;

a vertical shaft rotatably mounted inside the base and extending upwardly from the base;

a tension line having a first end connected in fixed relation to the base and a second end connected in fixed relation to a tubular member other than the first tubular member; and

an electric motor selectively providing rotational motion to the vertical shaft in one of two rotational directions;

the vertical shaft further comprising a threaded upper portion cooperatively engaged with at least one other tubular member to elevate the at least one other member relative to the first

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tubular member when the shaft is rotated in a first rotational direction and to lower the at least one other member relative to the first tubular member when the shaft is rotated in the second rotational direction.

Claim 49. (Cancelled).